10: d'Orleans--346 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 527, 796, 822

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"In the main street we encounter a cortége which is coming from Ouate Tâte to Ouate Sieng Tong, and this is supposed to be the old year which is being thus escorted. It is curious, in this connection, to note that the old year is fetched from the west, while the new year will come from the east, but I do not know whether this is due to chance or is a matter of tradition."

774 foul-smelling matter; the soul of tears; the soul of liquid fat; the
827 soul of the saliva; the soul of matter secreted by the brain; the soul of the marrow; and the soul of the urine.

774 "The following must be added to the union of these organs for
808 the formation of a man;

"Consciousness, name, individuality, image and the faculty of memory.

[822] "The four fundamental elements--earth, air, water and fire.

"And finally the five moral faculties;

"The faculty of distinguishing; the faculty of reflection; the faculty of judgment; the faculty of thought; and the ideal faculty of the soul, which is the source of love of the beautiful.

774 "Man is formed of all these diverse elements.

"Immediately after death all these souls or faculties fly off into
775 the air like a swarm of bees, separate from one another, and each one follows the path indicated by destiny. Of those which have done good on earth, some go directly to heaven and are used in the formation of an angel, while the others are reborn again in our world where they help in the creation of a man who is to lead a happy life full of wealth and honor. Those souls or faculties, on the other hand, which have contributed to evil actions appear before the Phaya-Nhom-Phi-Bane, the king of the nether regions, who judges them immediately and condemns them to tortures which may be more or less cruel depending on their degree of guilt.

"Once dispersed these souls can no longer recognize one another if they should meet again. On their way they meet other souls which are wandering like themselves and come from other parts of the world, and by their union, if God so ordains, they form the elements necessary to the birth of another man.

"The absence of memory and the complete forgetfulness of what has happened before their dispersion prevent the souls which are used in the vital mechanism of new births [160] from having any consciousness of their past existences. On the other hand, physical and moral resemblances between persons of different blood are due to the combining of souls which belonged to various individuals" (1).

(1) Captain Gosselin, op. cit. [Le Laos et le Protectorat français, 1900.]

436 It will perhaps be of some interest to note here that the peoples of Laos have no respect for European gold coins, [420] because their gold
822 is alloyed with copper! In this country, as in all of the Far East in
439 general, it is thought that gold is the noble metal par excellance, that
177 it is polluted and diminished by alloying it with copper, which is unworthy of it, and that it can endure being made into an alloy only with silver.

The only "gold" coins in use, and still not at all currently in northern Laos, are books of gold leaf the thickness of tinfoil. They come from China and bear the official stamps of the country's banks which put them into circulation as "merchandise" in the same way as bars of silver.

Weighing instruments

405 The weighing instruments used in Laos include the "Ta-Dieng" or "Sing," a Chinese steelyard made of wood which has three rows of graduations. It may have a hook or a single platform, and is used for weights ranging from one "Sang" (1.23849 kilograms) up to several piculs.

For weights of less than a "Sang" the same kind of Chinese steelyard, with a hook or platform, is used, but it is smaller and made of ivory or bone.

A small pair of beam scales with platforms shaped like cupels, which is called "Sing-Dieng," is used mainly for weighing precious metals and gems.

There are several series of weights for balances. They are made of bronze, iron or copper and are most diverse in shape, representing elephants, imaginary birds, hexagons, pentagons, cones, pyramids, etc.

2. TRADE COMMODITIES AND PRODUCTS OF EXCHANGE

438 Since there is no industry to speak of in Laos, the local products
241 which make up the basic commodities of interior trade and exports come mainly from agriculture, livestock raising, scavenging, fishing and hunting. Mention may be made, however, of certain products of local, not to say familial, industry which enter into interior commerce and to some extent into the trade which goes on with neighboring countries.

438 [421] These include cloth goods of pure silk, either plain or
433 spangled with gold, goods of silk blended with cotton, and wholly cotton goods, then articles of jewelry and goldsmithing, and finally metals and ores from the still rudimentary mining industry and pottery goods, edge-tools, basketry, etc.